A Message from Stephanie Spratt, CEO

Food Innovation with Purpose

School food is changing — and I believe that presents us with a really exciting opportunity.

At Olive Dining, we have always believed that young people deserve food that is **delicious, nutritious and made with care**. As our understanding of nutrition continues to develop, sustainability becomes increasingly important and new school food guidelines shape what we need to deliver, we have an opportunity to look again at the ingredients we use and find new and better ways of feeding the young people in our care.

For me, this is what food innovation should be about.

It isn't change for the sake of change, and it certainly isn't about following the latest trend. It's about being curious, doing our research and using the expertise of our chefs to find solutions that can improve nutrition and reduce our environmental impact, while still delivering food that young people genuinely enjoy, and at a cost that remains realistic for our schools.

That's why I'd like to introduce you to an ingredient our Development Chef team has been working with: **Eat Curious**.

A new approach to protein

As we continue to develop our menus in response to the new school food guidelines, one of the areas we are exploring is how we can provide good-quality protein while also increasing fibre and considering the environmental impact of the food we serve.

Reducing our reliance on meat in some dishes can play a part in that.

We've experimented with familiar alternatives such as lentils and beans, which can work extremely well nutritionally. However, we've also listened to our young diners. Texture and appearance matter, and these ingredients aren't always popular with younger palates.

We could ignore that feedback because something works well nutritionally on paper, however that isn't how we do things at Olive Dining.

Good nutrition only works when young people eat and enjoy the food we put in front of them.

So, our chefs went looking for another solution.

Introducing Eat Curious

Eat Curious is a dehydrated plant-based protein made from peas and faba beans. What makes it particularly interesting to us is its versatility.

It readily takes on the flavours of the dish in which it is cooked, so our chefs can use it to complement meat in familiar recipes or as a protein source within vegetarian dishes. Importantly, it does this without some of the textures associated with whole pulses that we know can sometimes be a barrier for younger diners.

This gives us the opportunity to make meaningful nutritional and environmental improvements while keeping dishes **familiar, appealing and, most importantly, delicious**.

The taste test

Of course, innovation only matters if it works on the plate.

Every new ingredient we consider has to earn its place on an Olive Dining menu, so our Development Chef team has been testing and refining recipes using Eat Curious.

One of our first tests was a favourite: **lasagne**.

We put our traditional beef lasagne alongside a version developed using Eat Curious and asked our Head Office team to taste them. They couldn't distinguish between the two.

For me, that's incredibly encouraging.

It shows that we can explore different ways of using protein without asking young people to compromise on the taste and enjoyment of dishes they already know and love.

Nutrition with a purpose

There's another important reason we're interested in Eat Curious: **fibre**.

Alongside being a source of protein, Eat Curious provides **16g of fibre per 100g**.

Fibre intake amongst children and young people remains an important nutritional challenge. Research indicates that only **14% of children aged 4–10 and 4% of**

young people aged 11–18 meet the recommended daily fibre intake for their age group.

So, if we can find clever ways of introducing more fibre into familiar dishes that young people already enjoy, that's something worth exploring.

It's a great example of what we mean by **food innovation with purpose**.

Responsible in every sense

Sustainability is important to us, but being responsible means looking at the whole picture.

Schools continue to operate in a challenging financial environment. Any innovation we introduce therefore has to make sense nutritionally, environmentally **and commercially**.

We assess new ingredients for quality, nutrition and environmental impact, but also for affordability, consistency, availability and whether they can work successfully across our kitchens.

We don't believe responsible food has to mean expensive food.

Our challenge is to use our buying expertise, our chefs' creativity and new food technologies to find **smarter ways of delivering better nutritional and environmental outcomes while continuing to provide excellent value**.

Eat Curious gives our chefs another tool to help us achieve that balance.

Thinking about our environmental impact

We're also excited by the potential environmental benefits.

Information provided by Eat Curious reports a carbon footprint significantly below conventional meat proteins, including figures of almost **10 times lower than chicken and 100 times lower than beef**.

We'll continue to examine the evidence behind these claims as part of our evaluation, but the principle is important.

When you're responsible for serving large numbers of meals, relatively small changes can add up to something much bigger.

We don't want to remove choice or tell young people what they should and shouldn't eat. Instead, we believe our role is to use **great ingredients, culinary expertise and innovation to make more responsible choices genuinely appealing**.

What happens next?

We're still learning.

Our Development Chef team will continue to test and refine recipes using Eat Curious, looking carefully at taste, nutrition, pupil feedback, environmental impact and, importantly, value for money.

We'll listen to our schools. We'll listen to our pupils. And we'll use that feedback alongside the nutritional evidence to decide how ingredients such as Eat Curious can best form part of our future menus.

That's important because **being at the forefront of food innovation doesn't mean being first simply for the sake of it**.

For Olive Dining, it means being curious enough to explore new ideas, responsible enough to properly test them and confident enough to embrace change when we know it can deliver something better.

As we continue developing our menus for the new school food guidelines, I'm genuinely excited about what lies ahead.

Our goal remains beautifully simple: **great-tasting, nutritious food that young people want to eat, delivered responsibly and at a price that works for our schools.**

That's food innovation with purpose.

I hope you enjoy trying our latest dishes, and we'd love to hear what you think.

I attached a summary Eat Curious presentation for you to share with your parents and teams.

With Best Wishes

Stephanie Spratt
CEO, Olive Dining

Olive dining
food with passion